

## **TESTIMONY BY MINISTER STACY M. SWIMP AGAINST THE EXPANSION OF THE MICHIGAN ELLIOTT LARSON ACT**

Qualitative and quantitative data has overwhelmingly demonstrated that declaring special protection based on so-called "Sexual Orientation" a "civil right" shall ultimately lead to Christian business owners and others being forced, against their will, to violate their religious conscience.

The fact is that expanding the Elliott Larson Act to include "sexual orientation" as a "civil right" is a means to force the people of the State of Michigan - Christians in particular, to accept what our religious beliefs determine to be immoral sexual conduct between two men or between two women.

This proposed legislation is yet another step in the assault on religious freedom. Our culture has been relentlessly inundated with images of sodomy and same sex marriage campaigns. Moreover, Christians are mercilessly attacked in the media and even at our private businesses for refusing to endorse these images and campaigns.

I ask the Commerce Committee and the Michigan Legislature, can you begin to clearly define "sexual orientation"? Do you truly know what you are potentially aligning yourselves with?

The proposed expansion of our State's civil rights laws to include "sexual orientation" legislation is identical to policies and laws adopted in other states and countries that have resulted in Christian churches, pastors, and church members being discriminated against, fired, fined, expelled from school, and pressured to violate their conscience and moral opposition to homosexual "marriage" and homosexual behavior itself.

The following are but a few examples:

- Julea Ward, the Black public school teacher from Southfield expelled from Eastern Michigan University's counseling program for refusing as a matter of religious conscience to counsel a student on how to improve his homosexual relationship
- Crystal Dixon, the Black vice president of the University of Toledo fired from her job for writing a letter to editor disputing claims that the "gay rights" agenda is comparable to the Black civil rights movement of the 1960s. (Over the objection of "gay" activists, Dixon was hired as personnel director for the city of Jackson, Michigan, after which it was my privilege to have dinner with her, a true victim of discriminatory "sexual orientation" policies.)
- The Christian photographer in New Mexico who was fined \$6,600 for refusing as a matter of religious conscience to photograph a lesbian wedding, a fine unanimously upheld by the New Mexico Supreme Court. By the way, Rasmussen Reports found in June 2013 that 85 percent of Americans disagreed with that fine and believe Christians should not be forced by discriminatory laws to violate their religious beliefs.
- A husband and wife in N.Y., Robert and Cynthia Gifford, were fined \$13,000 and told they could not discriminate against same-sex couples after refusing to allow a homosexual wedding on their N.Y. farm, on their private property, in the same building in which they live. A judge ruled that the Giffords' farm is a public accommodation because they rent their space out, and they therefore must abide by New York anti-discrimination law, which homosexuals call a "civil rights" law on their behalf. The Giffords no longer

host wedding ceremonies on their private property due to the persecution and stripping of their religious freedom successfully brought about by homosexual activism and "gay civil rights".

I ask- Is the Michigan Legislature now the champion of changing culture and forcing a change of the personal values of the people of this state? Is the Michigan Legislature prepared to legalize what has been previously considered criminal sexual conduct? Is that a responsibility of the state government?

This is not a "civil rights" movement the Commerce Committee is considering supporting, but something incredibly sinister.

Writing in the Chicago Free Press, even homosexual activist Paul Varnell admitted:

"The fundamental controverted issue about homosexuality is not discrimination, hate crimes or domestic partnerships, but the morality of homosexuality. Even if gays obtain non discrimination laws, hate crime laws and domestic partnership benefits, those can do little to counter the underlying moral condemnation which will continue to fester beneath the law and generate hostility, fuel hate crimes, support conversion therapies, encourage gay youth suicide and inhibit the full social acceptance that is our goal.

On the other hand, if we convince people that homosexuality is fully moral, then all their inclination to discriminate, engage in gay bashing or oppose gay marriage disappears. Gay youths and adults could readily accept themselves. So the gay movement, whether we acknowledge it or not, is not a civil rights movement, not even a sexual liberation movement, but a moral revolution aimed at changing people's view of homosexuality."- Paul Varnell, "Defending Our Morality", Chicago Free Press, August 16, 2000.

An excerpt from "Defending A Higher Law", by the American Society for the Defense of Tradition, Family, and Property (TFP) also speaks to the true agenda of the homosexual demographic, which is **NOT** "civil rights":

*"For the first time, however, in the history of the Christian West, and perhaps humanity, society faces not just scattered groups of influential homosexuals, but an organized, visible movement of avowed homosexuals who not only boast of their habits but unite in an attempt to impose their ideology on society.*

*This is the homosexual movement—a vast network of organizations, pressure groups, radical intellectuals and activists who strive to impose changes in laws, customs, morals and mentalities, so that homosexuality is not only tolerated but also accepted as good and normal. Hence, movement activists pressure society to legalize both the practice and the public manifestations of homosexuality, such as same-sex "marriage," while relentlessly assailing those who defend traditional morals."*

In effect, this is "you will be made to care" legislation which is aimed specifically at Christian business owners who refuse to embrace homosexual conduct as acceptable.

There is yet another issue that is important to address, which is the myth that "gay rights" are in any way similar to the "civil rights" struggles of Black Americans.

As I have repeatedly stated in numerous venues, no one from the LGBT community has ever had fire hoses turned on them by city police. They have never drunk out of a LGBT water fountain or been forced to sit at the back of the bus in an LGBT section.

Lesbian, Homosexual, bisexual and transgender Americans have never been denied their voting rights, nor have they been denied the right to assemble.

Black Americans had to stand up or step off the sidewalk whenever a White American walked by us. Has anyone from the LGBT community had to stand up or step off the sidewalk whenever a "straight" person walked by?

Have lesbian, homosexual, bisexual and transgender Americans been forced to eat in the back kitchen of a restaurant where they worked? Have they been forced to attend separate schools or been spit on acceptably in public?

Black Americans were publicly lynched, specifically excluded from moving into neighborhoods, prohibited from sitting on a jury and denied the right to sue others.

The LGBT community, furthermore, has never been subject to federally funded eugenics campaigns such as Margaret Sanger openly promoted in founding Planned Parenthood, nor have they ever been excluded from attending a public university, or prohibited from living in a public dormitory.

To state that the legislative agenda of expanding the definition of 'civil rights' to include sexual orientation is in any way similar to the Civil Rights movement is intellectually empty, dishonest and manufactured.

A significant notion has been brought forth by a so called "competitive workforce coalition" in Michigan which alleges that it will be economically beneficial to homosexuals and the State of Michigan if homosexual conduct is redefined as a "civil right" and made equal with even the struggle of Black Americans to achieve economic independence.

Studies, however, have shown that Homosexuals have already achieved the economic independence Black American continue to fall short of.

Some examples are:

- The Annual median income of Black Americans is \$33,321. The annual median household incomes of homosexuals is \$45,776
- The unemployment rate of Black Americans is 12.1 percent. The unemployment rate of homosexuals is 7 percent. Homosexuals do not struggle with access to economic opportunities due to their sexual orientation. Black Americans, on the other hand, continue to struggle for economic freedom.

Indeed, per a 2012 Prudential Survey, "Lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) Americans earn more, save more and have less debt and are better prepared for retirement."

I have come before the Michigan House Commerce Committee and State Legislature to denounce this false exploitation, by the LGBT community, of the legacy of Black Americans and our historical (and current) struggle for social equality and economic freedom.

The Michigan Legislature has a sworn duty to uphold the constitutionally protected freedoms of every citizen in the state — including Christian business owners.

Therefore, the Commerce Committee should not consider voting out of committee, and sending to the House Floor, a Bill that would grant special privileges, guarantee special protections or grant special status to a specific group - in this case, the LGBTQ community, based solely on their choice of sexual behavior.

Nor should the Commerce Committee consider voting in support of legislation which would clearly coerce and punish Christian business owners who hold to specific religious or moral beliefs.

Sincerely,

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